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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an instructional model designed to help teachers give life to personal educational philosophy in classroom practice. It examines traditional instructional goals versus goals influenced by William Ayers, noting other influences on the paradigm shift in the teaching of educational philosophy, then explains three new perspectives on the teaching of educational philosophy (philosophy of education is not just the way one thinks, but also the way one acts; one's educational philosophy is embedded both in what one believes about teaching and learning and what one actually does in practice; and the teaching of educational philosophy should focus on helping neophytes and practitioners bridge the gap between educational philosophy as an inert subject and as an everyday presence in the classroom). After discussing how to match thought with action, the paper offers a three-step model for giving life to educational thought in practice: inviting participating teachers to construct a root metaphor for their teaching that incorporates a personal interest or imagery/artifact in their quality world picture; subsuming traditional schools of philosophy under the overlay of three teacher-friendly and applied orientations of teaching (executive, therapist, and liberationist approaches); and structuring a two-part presentation in which teachers can connect their educational philosophy to their teaching. (SM)

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It's the Way We Think and Do: Energizing and Focusing Teaching Through Connection of Educational Philosophy and Practice.

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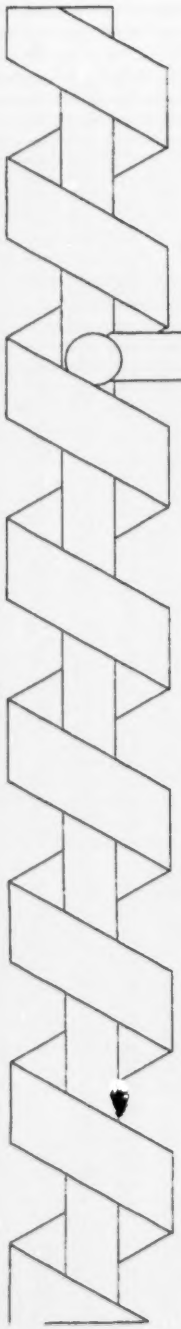
Arizona State University West

Presented at the 82nd Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators, Denver, Colorado, February 2 – 6, 2002.

Summary of Conference Program

This presentation describes an instructional model designed to enable inservice teachers attain the professional strength that comes from the freedom to give life to personal educational philosophy in classroom practice.



The Traditional Mindset of My Pre-Ayers Days: Instructional Goals

- To facilitate the development of the skills of philosophical thinking through the study of different educational belief systems.
- To help students acquire the knowledge of how the components of philosophy – epistemology, ontology, and axiology – impact our educational beliefs.
- To guide students to construct and articulate a meaningful philosophy of education.

Paradigm Shift in the Teaching of Educational Philosophy: The Influence of William Ayers

- "The learning environment is a complex, living reflection of a teacher's values" (Ayers, 1993, p. 57).
- "In this one environmental choice – the choice to display student work – I am expressing larger purposes and more overarching values…. In this choice, I am enacting locally a range of things I believe in globally (Ayers, 1993, p. 55).

Paradigm Shift in the Teaching of Educational Philosophy: Other Influences

- Philosophy should strive "to attain as unified, consistent and complete outlook upon practice as possible" (Dewey, 1916, p.324).
- Having a clear conception of what education is gives the teacher the "opportunity to control many of the practical forces that impinge on him or her, rather than becoming a hapless victim of these forces" (Fernstermacher & Soltis, 1992, p.57).
- Personal practical knowledge of which philosophy of education is a critical element, is ever present in a teacher's practice. Philosophy of education encompasses the rules that are at work in a teacher's personal practical knowledge (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997).

Three New Perspectives about the Teaching of Educational Philosophy

1. Philosophy of education is not just the way we think, but also the way we do.

2. One's educational philosophy is imbedded both in what one believes about teaching and learning and what one actually does in their practice.

3. Therefore, the teaching of educational philosophy should have as its focus the goal of helping neophytes and practitioners bridge the gap between educational philosophy as an inert subject, and as an everyday presence in the classroom.

Matching Thought with Action: The Place and the Challenge

- The challenge of teaching a graduate summer course in philosophy of education to inservice teachers at an off campus setting.
- The graduate program was construed by participating teachers as a two-year investment in sustained professional development that would lead to a Master's degree and a higher elevation on their school district's salary scale.
- Participating teachers expected graduate courses to furnish them knowledge and skills, magic bullets that would immediately inform their classroom practice – the tip of the week type of orientation.
- Practicality ruled in the teaching of graduate students in this off campus program.

Giving Life to Educational Thought in Classroom Practice: A Three-Step Facilitation Model

1. Inviting participating teachers to construct a root metaphor for their teaching that incorporated a personal interest, passion, or some imagery or artifact in their quality world picture.
2. Subsuming traditional schools of philosophy under the overlay of three teacher-friendly and applied orientations of teaching: the executive approach, the therapist approach and the liberationist approach.
3. Structuring a two-part presentation in which teachers were to connect their educational philosophy to their teaching.

First Step: Constructing Root Metaphors

Writing a root metaphor for teaching requires tapping into one's personal experiences to inform one's teaching world. A root metaphor for teaching subsumes one's belief about teaching expressed as a quality life "word picture" (Hagstrom et al., 2000, p. 24).

Creating Root Metaphors: Three Associated Concepts

- Resonance: To resound or sound again, to echo for example "stories ring true"
- Harmony: Our passions can inform our work and vice versa.
- Vibrations: Connection– Feeding energy from one person or thing to another.

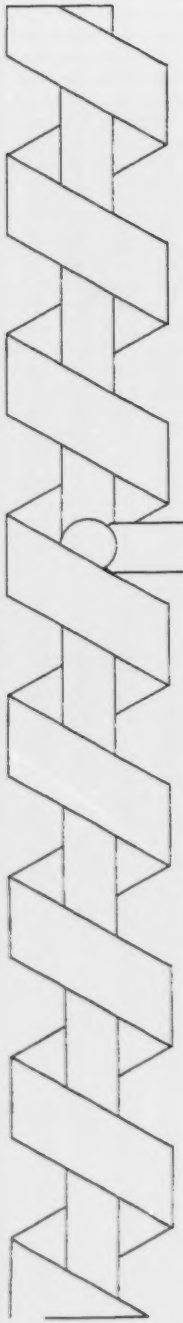
Hagstrom. D. et al. (2000, pp. 24-27).

A Root Metaphor for Writing a Metaphor for Teaching

A root metaphor for teaching is a beautiful garden in our cognitive and affective perspectives where we continually resort when we need to be professionally recharged and renewed.

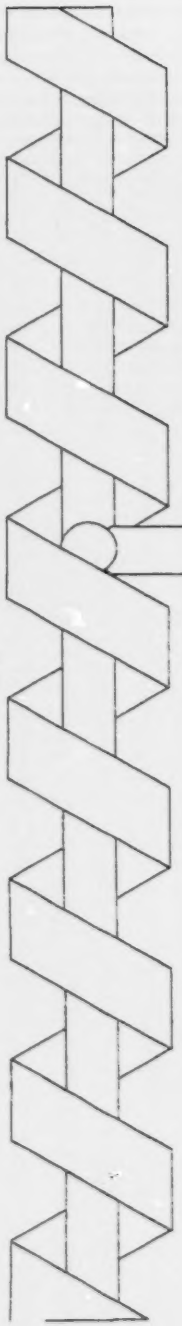
Teacher A elementary school teacher: Teaching can be like the roller coasters in Disneyland

You have students who are like Gadgets Go Coaster. They look like they are not actively participating, but they are absorbing the up and downs of your curriculum. Occassionally, they will surprise you, like the squirting frogs with an insight. You have other students who are like Big Thunder Mountain Railroad. They participate and get down to business... but you better watch out for the fast turns of their minds. They will take you off on different, interesting directions.



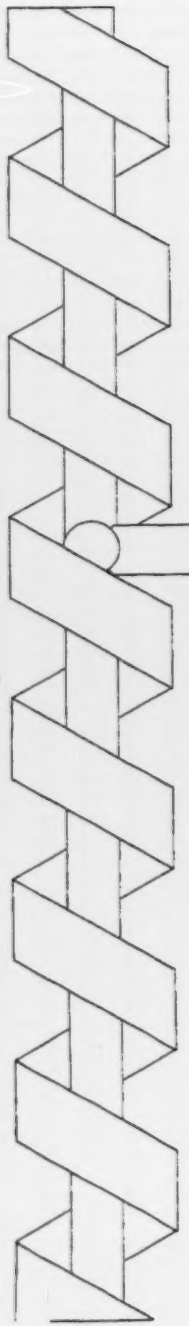
Teacher A: Teaching can be like the roller coasters in Disneyland (contd.)

Then, there are the students who are like Space Mountain. They see everything as a learning experience. The world is an exciting void, just waiting to be explored. Everyone has a day where it seems like the class has gotten on a Disney Railroad. You are riding around in circles, hoping to get off soon and ride one of the exciting roller coasters of learning.



Teacher B elementary school teacher: The Art of Teaching

I am given what seems like rough, shapeless figures when the year begins. As I look at my subjects, I realize that I don't decide how the sculpture will turn out, but the sculptures tell me how to shape them. I use various tools and techniques to smooth rough edges, round sharp corners, and add fine detail. … I leave certain aspects of the sculpture unfinished, so that time, experience and future sculptors may fill in the holes or carve out the niches that I have left.

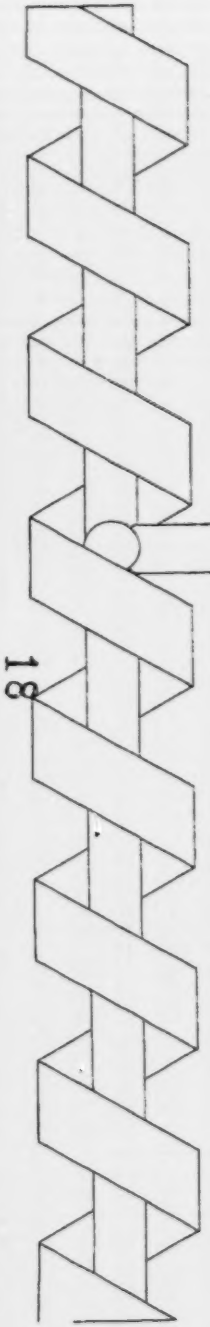


Teacher B: The Art of Teaching (contd.)

When the piece of work leaves my studio, it is no longer the same; it has changed, ready for the next artist. The masterpiece that leaves will stand the test of time, gain appreciation and value with age, out in the real world.

Teacher C high school teacher: Puzzle Maker

As a teacher, I work on about 100 puzzles everyday. Each puzzle is different and many other teachers have put their own effort into getting their own pieces to fit. I have no control over whether the puzzle has been damaged or is missing pieces. I work with what I have, and do everything possible to get my pieces to fit. Sometimes the pieces fit easily, sometimes they don't. I experience a sense of pride when I am successful, but I don't usually get to see the completed project....



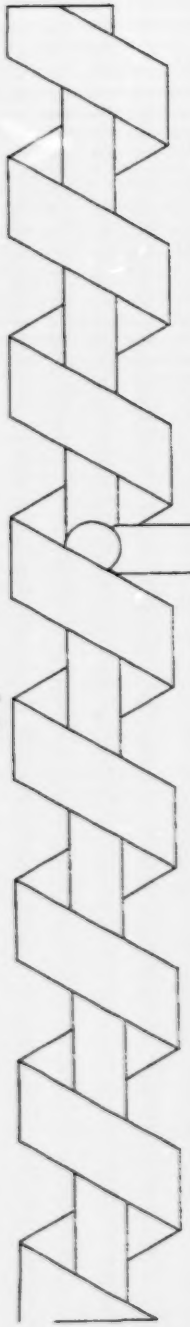
Teacher D middle school teacher: Finding the Key to the "Locke" – ed Mind

Teaching is like being a locksmith. Every individual has a unique intellect which when unlocked by the best fitting key, will be set free to reach unlimited heights. The teacher must help the student find their unique key.

Teaching metaphor inspired by John Locke, British philosopher.

Teacher E elementary school teacher: Quilting An Education

Teaching is like a patchwork quilt. Each student is a piece in the quilt. Looking at the quilt from the back the strings are tangled and long, the edges are rough and one wonders if it could ever be a thing of beauty. Each year a section is finished and added to my quilt of memories. The class has finally come together. Although some pieces may not quite fit, as a whole the quilt is a beautiful piece.

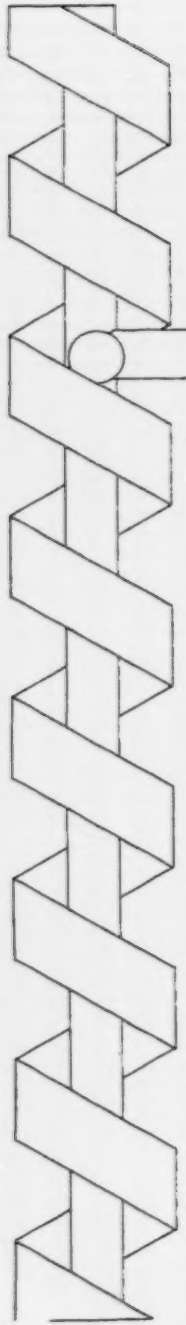


Teacher F elementary school teacher: Directing Angelic Voices

Teaching is like being a choir director. Each student's mind is like a unique voice with its pitch problems and wavering tonality. If I, as a teacher, take these untrained voices and turn them into those of angels, then I will have succeeded in my task. With practice, skill building and perseverance each voice will be transformed from that of an untrained novice to that of the master vocalist.

Teacher G middle school special education teacher: The Primary Colors of Teaching

Painters' palettes of primary colors are teachers creating countless unique paintings. Regardless of the innumerable possible selection of shades, the palette uses its artistry to develop whatever colors are necessary to add to the paintings until they reach their potential beauty, meaning and value.



Step 2: Framework for Thinking about Educational Philosophy

- The executive approach
- The therapist approach
- The liberationist

Fernstermacher, G.D. & Soltis, J.F. (1998)

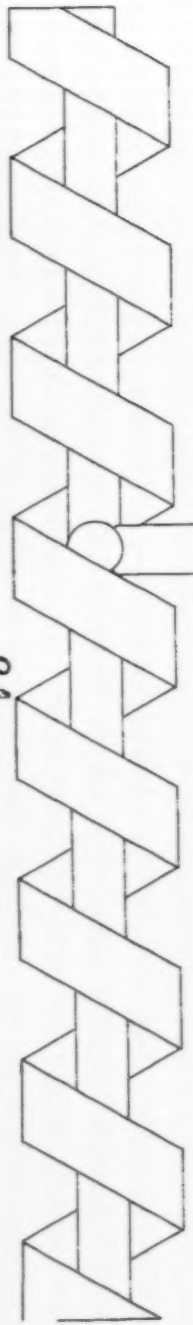
Step 3: Connecting Educational Philosophy and Practice

Core Beliefs about:

- Students' growth and development
- What knowledge is of most worth?
- Instructional strategies
- Purpose of education
- Assessment of learning

Implementation of core beliefs

- Classroom organization
- Interaction with students
- Perceived and taught curriculum
- Instructional strategies
- Assessment of learning
- Working with other educators
- Professional development



Putting the Three Steps Together: Student B's Belief about Students

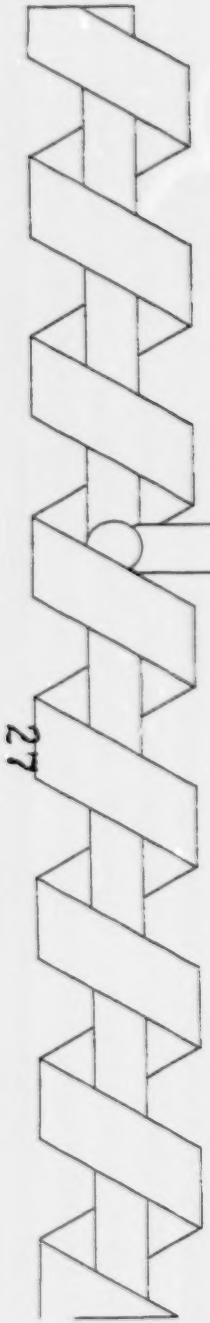
The students come to me as works-in-progress, clay that must be further molded and shaped. They are a sculpture that tells me what they are to become. Their personalities and learning styles create the mold that I will use. The students will then be ready for whatever may come in their educational lives.

Putting the Three Steps Together: Student B's Belief about Instruction

As an artist, a sculptor must rely on a variety of tools to create a sculpture. A teacher must depend on different strategies and styles to shape the mind of a student. I am basically a therapist at heart who bounces between the executive and liberationist approaches.

Putting the Three Steps Together: Student B's Practiced Instructional Strategies:

Whole class and small group activities, "buddy' work – working with sixth grade buddies, weekly spelling test, individual and group projects, discovery learning and presentations.



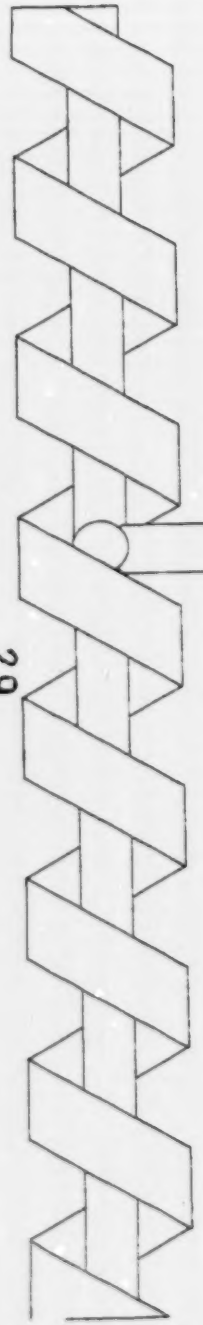
Putting the Three Steps Together: Student B's Belief about Assessment of Learning

I believe that there are many ways to assess a student. One cannot base a child's learning on any one style of assessment. A student must be assessed using a broad range of strategies. A student must be given a chance to shine, just like a piece of art that has its day in the gallery.

Evidence of Success

- The representation of teaching in metaphoric terms moved teachers to start thinking about practice in personally gratifying and imaginative ways.

- The recurring reference to their root metaphors and approach to teaching during the philosophy and practice presentations reflected teachers' attunement to these themes, and the efficacy of the themes as a powerful vehicle for connecting educational beliefs and practice.



Creating a Metaphor for Teaching

What is your root metaphor for teaching?

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